



Agricultural Marketing Service

[Doc. No. AMS-TM-23-0076]

Notice of Availability of the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for AMS Organic Market Development Grant Program

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability; request for public comments.

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) announces that the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) for the Organic Market Development Grant Program (OMDG) is available for public review and comments.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER] to be assured consideration.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this notice. Comments may be submitted electronically by Email: OMDG@usda.gov. Comments should reference the document number and the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register**. AMS will address comments received on the draft PEA in the final PEA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Betsy Rakola, Associate Deputy Administrator, Transportation and Marketing Program; Telephone: (202)-690-1300; Email: OMDG@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Draft PEA analyzes and discloses the potential environmental impacts associated with the establishment of the Organic Market Development Grant Program (OMDG). AMS has proposed to fund grants to support the development of new and

expanded organic markets by providing additional resources for businesses transitioning to organic or initiating new organic production and processing capacity. These grants will create new and improved markets for domestically produced organic products through investments in expanded certified organic processing capacity; activities that develop, maintain, or expand commercial organic markets; and organic product developments which create new uses for producers that currently lack markets.

Selected applicants for the OMDG program may invest in certified organic infrastructure and expand processing capacities, in addition to adding manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, or distribution infrastructure. Funded activities will include developing new markets to increase demand for domestically produced organic agricultural products and providing additional market networks.

The OMDG Program is authorized by authorized by section 5(e) of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act, (15 U.S.C. 714(e)). Section 5(e), as amended, authorizes USDA (through the CCC) to “increase the domestic consumption of agricultural commodities (other than tobacco) by expanding or aiding in the expansion of domestic markets or by developing or aiding in the development of new and additional markets, marketing facilities, and uses for such commodities”. Recipients of funding from this proposed program would be allowed 36 months to complete work funded by the grant awards.

The environmental impacts of funding projects to enhance existing organic processing facilities have been considered in a manner consistent with the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, Public Law 91-190, 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347, as amended.

A Draft PEA has been prepared, and based on this analysis, AMS has preliminarily determined there will not be a significant impact to the human environment. As a result, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) has not been initiated (40 CFR

1501.6). AMS intends for this PEA to create efficiencies by establishing a framework that can be used for “tiering,” where appropriate, to project-specific actions that require additional analysis. As decisions on specific applications are made, to the extent additional NEPA analysis is required, environmental review will be conducted to supplement the analysis set forth in this PEA.

The Draft PEA is available for review online at the program website:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/localmcap>.

Comments Invited

Interested stakeholders are invited to submit comments on the Draft PEA, as specified in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice. The most helpful comments reference a specific recommendation for changing AMS’s proposed approach to assessing environmental impacts, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting information. AMS will consider all comments received on or before the closing date.

Melissa Bailey,

Associate Administrator,

Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 2023-25564 Filed: 11/17/2023 8:45 am; Publication Date: 11/20/2023]